

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 5267

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OEXC, CG

SUBJECT: IV JOURNALISTS FORBIDDEN TO TRAVEL
ON "ORDERS OF PRESIDENT"

REF: KINSHASA 5239; KINSHASA 5244

1. U.S. TRAVEL OF FOUR ZAIRIAN JOURNALISTS SELECTED FOR IV GRANTS CANCELED AT LAST MINUTE JUNE 15 BY IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL AT AIRPORT WHO SAID HE HAD "JUST RECEIVED TELEPHONE CALL FROM PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC "SAYING THAT FOUR JOURNALISTS WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE ZAIRE UNTIL "NEW ORDERS ARE RECEIVED."

2. ON SATURDAY MORNING, JUNE 14, DAY BEFORE SCHEDULED DEPARTURE, GRANTEE SI DOMBASI MAVATIKU ASKED TO SEE TWO USIS OFFICERS "CONFIDENTIALLY" AND SAID HE HAD BEEN CALLED IN BY POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBER GAMBEMBO, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE "WRITTEN PRESS" UNDER NEW POLITICAL BUREAU GUIDELINES. ACCORDING TO DOMBASI, GAMBEMBO ASKED HIM TO "WATCH OVER HIS COLLEAGUES." DOMBASI SAID HE WAS ASKED TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF "PRESENT RELATIONS BETWEEN U.S. AND ZAIRE." USIS OFFICER ASKED HIM IF HE HAD ANY IDEA WHAT GAMBEMBO WAS REFERRING TO. DOMBASI REPLIED "MAYBE BECAUSE OF THE ATTEMPTED COUP." HE DID NOT ELABORATE.

3. THE FOUR JOURNALISTS WERE CALLED IN BY GAMBEMBO
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SATURDAY AFTERNOON AFTER THEY HAD COMPLETED ALL PRE-

DEPARTURE FORMALITIES. ACCORDING TO THE JOURNALISTS, GAMBEMBO TOLD THEM TO BEHAVE THEMSELVES, AND "BE LIKE THE CHINESE--LISTEN CAREFULLY AND DON'T SPEAK MUCH." GAMBEMBO, ACCORDING TO JOURNALISTS, "CONFIRMED" THE TRIP.

4. ON WAY TO AIRPORT SUNDAY AFTERNOON, ONE OF JOURNALISTS TOLD USIS OFFICER ACCOMPANYING HIM THAT HIS DIRECTOR-GENERAL HAD CONTACTED HIM SHORTLY BEFORE AND HAD TOLD HIM THAT THE PRESIDENT DID NOT WANT THE JOURNALISTS TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY.

5. SINCE NO OFFICIAL WORD HAD BEEN RECEIVED, TRAVELERS CONTINUED TO UNDERTAKE DEPARTURE FORMALITIES AT AIRPORT UNTIL IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL INFORMED THEM THAT THEY COULD NOT LEAVE. OFFICIAL WOULD NOT ELABORATE ON CIRCUMSTANCES EXCEPT TO REPEATEDLY SAY THAT THE "PRESIDENT HIMSELF" HAD CALLED.

6. MINISTER OF NATIONAL ORIENTATION TOLD CAO THAT CANCELLATION WAS A "PRESIDENTIA VETO."

7. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, SATURDAY'S ELIMA CONTAINS ARTICLE ON PRE-DEPARTURE LUNCH OFFERED BY USIS OFFICER FOR IV JOURNALISTS. ARTICLE, PLAYED PROMINENTLY ON PAGE TWO, PRAISES EXCHANGE PROGRAM, SAYS THAT U.S. IS "AMONG THOSE NATIONS WHICH HAS HAD GOOD RELATIONS WITH OUR COUNTRY FOR MANY YEARS."

8. COMMENT: APPEARANCE OF NEWSPAPER ARTICLE AND GAMBEMBO "APPROVAL" OF TRIP SATURDAY INDICATE THAT, DESPITE APPROACH TO DOMBASI, TRIP WAS ON. LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS LATER, IT WAS CALLED OFF, FROM THESE INDICATIONS, AT THE "PERSONAL REQUEST OF THE PRESIDENT." HINTON

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